

OUR VIEW: Prepare to recycle plastic bottles

Jun 17, 2009

A state law that goes into effect this fall will force many North Carolina residents to change the way they handle their empty plastic bottles. As of Oct. 1, it becomes illegal to just toss your empty plastic water bottle or soft drink bottle into the trash. Instead, look for the nearest recycling bin.

Now, don't be afraid if you slip up - because of old, bad habits - and mistakenly toss a plastic Diet Dew bottle into the garbage that the long arm of the law is going to grab you. Such violations won't be high on the priority list for local law enforcement officers, but the goal here is not to punish folks. The idea is to get every resident of the Tarheel State to adopt a new attitude about discarding recyclable plastic bottles and, really, any materials that are recyclable.

Sure, some will raise objections to this new law. But this is one of those examples where a law requires the general public to do something that it should have begun doing voluntarily long ago. Recycling plastic bottles (and other recyclable materials) is just a smart practice for people to employ in an economy that runs on consumption of manufactured products.

Of course, cities, counties and private garbage haulers will have to be more cognizant of the garbage they process because plastic bottles will be banned from landfills they use. And with commercial demand for recyclable plastic rising, it may be feasible for garbage haulers - whether public or private - to create new or pump up existing recycling programs.

But there's another great reason to make the extra effort to keep recyclable materials out of the trash. An Enterprise report Monday said state officials think the new law banning plastic bottles (and wooden pallets and oil filters) from landfills will encourage creation of jobs by companies that recycle the plastics and other materials. And then there's the possibility that companies which are heavy users of recycled materials would locate here and provide jobs, too.

It certainly seems that recycling is a growth industry, and that's good for us all.

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